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United States Department of Agriculture
Office of Marketing Services
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THE VERDICT ON LABELING

Sample Labels Submitted - The Opinions of the Housewives -
Receipts Wanted - A Worth-while Test - By BETTER PROFITS.

The other day the Director of U. S. Inspected Foods Educational Service mailed me a number of labels from members of the Educational Service or those using the labels of the U. S. Department of Agriculture continuous inspection service. They are so interesting as arranged that I must give our readers a review of them. Incidentally, continue reading if you are a regular reader of this column, even though you feel the material herein will only be a rehash of previous articles, because I think I will still be able to make a point or two for the serious consideration of all canners.

When Polly Gade mailed the labels with the accompanying mimeographed request for consideration and comment, I am quite sure she had in mind that a particular label might be the one selected by the majority queried as being the one most satisfactorily answering the question, namely: "Which of these U. S. Graded labels would best give you the information you seek in making a buying decision at your grocery store?" At least I made my selection before and not after reading that the canner using it was a member of U. S. Inspected Foods Educational Service. I was not satisfied with this, however, and asked my wife as well as other ladies, all practical, working housewives, which would best answer the question asked and their answer was not mine. I hope that Polly Gade has mailed her questionnaire to many housewives and not to so many of the male persuasion, for the best interests of the canners who will eventually be influenced by the results of the mailing.

THE LABELS

Out of seventeen labels, all beautiful, all attention compelling, all well colored and all ornaments to any can they may adorn, only five carried any specific information as to uses of the contents. The one taking the eye of the majority of housewives whom I queried was the only one carrying two complete receipts. The label of the East Jordan Canning Company, East Jordan, Michigan, in my opinion is not quite as attractive in coloring for instance as are some of the other seventeen labels, but it does carry two complete receipts, one for cherry pie and the other for cherry cobbler. Jordan products in their entirety are listed, as well as thumb nail descriptions of the location of the plant as being in the territory around Grand Traverse Bay and the Charlevoix section. The statement that these sections are noted for the high quality and deliciousness of their fruits will help keep users sold on the label on any product. So then, the vote of the housewives I queried went to the label carrying two receipts for the use of the product.

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HARD SELLING - Polly Gade, Director U. S. Inspected Foods Educational Service, those canned foods that are produced under continuous inspection by the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, at the factories, sent us a batch of the labels being used by some members. This is being done under a campaign they are making to the consumers, under the term "Making the Grade," but we are glad she gave us the opportunity to see the labels in question. All these goods are officially graded and plainly marked with the grades A, B, or C, or their equivalents, Fancy, Choice, or Standard.

These labels are commented upon by "Better Profits" this week, an expert in canned foods merchandising, and we would not attempt to enter into contest with him, even though we both see the matter in the same light.

Our own reaction to the display, and the request for an opinion, is that we would hate to be a canner with the ordinary, usual, lack-selling power label on our products, nor even a famous brand owner, and have to sell in competition with these labels. They are not only handsome labels, they are informative to the last degree, answering every question in the minds of the good consumer buyers, but they have other strong drawing properties, too: they are all canners' labels, with the name and address of the canner packing the goods; they all bear testimony that the goods are produced under careful Government inspection and they all tell her plainly the quality she will find within the tinned walls.

They are all so radically different from most other labels that there is no justifiable comparison. Exactly, they stand alone. And if with the passing of the war we do have to face hard selling conditions, the competition will be even worse than it is today. Today they may buy anything, but then, when they will have the run of the market, and will be trying to stretch their budget dollars they will most certainly take these goods, the goods bearing these or similar labels, rather than the poor-orphan labels with little else than a brand name. Even where some description is given it leaves them cold, if not mystified!!

MY VOTE

I'll give you all detail on the one receiving my vote and the reasons therefor. Schuckl and Company, Sunnyvale, California have a label on "Punch California unpeeled apricots in heavy syrup net weight one pound fourteen ounces, U. S. Grade A fancy" in California hand lettering two colors, black and yellow, in reverse plate with a red background centered in a circle surrounded by a label background of California unpeeled apricots. To the right is repeated the shield of the U. S. Department of Agriculture as to the product being Fancy, this is black on white. Immediately below in a small, vertical box, printed black on buff, is the legend: "Packed by Schuckl & Company, Inc., Sunnyvale, California. Under continuous inspection of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Product of U.S.A."

Now comes the interesting part of the label. In a panel three and a half inches by three and three quarters inches, in four colors on buff, we read and see: "PUNCH HALVES APRICOTS. U. S. Grade A Fancy (in the typical shield) Selection Information No. $2\frac{1}{2}$ Size, $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups, 1 lb. 4 ounces, 6 to 8 servings. U. S. Grade A Punch Halves Apricots are full ripe - practically uniform in color, size, and symmetry - tender texture - with normal apricot flavor. Use these apricots just as they are for desserts - fruit plates - salads - and as a meat garnish - with bananas and cranberry sauce in cocktails - as garnish on apricot ring - or around ice cream, on thin macaroons. Store unused portions, covered, in refrigerator. Syrup may be mixed, flavored, colored, and served as an appetizer - or frozen into sherbets or ices. Boiled down it may be used to sweeten desserts - gelatins - sauces - and beverages - as well as a syrup for basting meats - or adding to other cooked fruits." We read further set out in larger red type of the buff background: "Punch brand offers a complete line of U. S. Grade A fruits and vegetables. For U. S. Grade B or C use Mission Peak, U. S. Grade B (Choice) or Black Knight, U. S. Grade C (Standard)." (Both these suggestions are accompanied by the shields). In script we read in black: "All packed under the continuous inspection of the U. S. Department of Agriculture." Then as the last item on the panel mentioned is the company signature and the legend: "Member U. S. Inspected Foods Educational Service."

To the thinking purchaser, this label seems to carry a maximum of information of value to them and to the packers as well. Many are familiar with the gradings choice, standard, and so on and will be helped by this designation in connection with the letterings until the public are better informed than they are today as to just what grade A, B, and C means in terms of quality to which they are most accustomed. The description of the product in the can must answer every requirement of the suggested label to be more generally adopted by the proponents of Descriptive Labeling. The suggested uses of the product are ample, no one need be at a loss as to how to use it most satisfactorily.

SELLING JOB

The color scheme of the label is attractive, it attracts attention. A complete selling job has been done on this label, as complete as is possible as far as I can see. In connection with the fullness of this description I cannot help but notice the favorable position of the canner in comparison to others. Statements of the contents need not frighten anyone as might be the case unless they were well informed or very hungry when reading some statements on other foods.

Soon, no doubt, many others will follow the example set by Schuckl & Co., and use both the continuous grade labeling inspection service and the resultant A's, B's, C's, and so on, and the suggested descriptive labeling by means of which some have hoped to avoid telling the public in no uncertain terms that their product is Fancy, Choice, or Standard.

Their doing so will tie the efforts of Schuckl and Company and others in like positions but they will not beat them!

Commenting briefly, in closing, on the other fifteen unmentioned labels in those for the U. S. Inspected Foods inspection service, as I have mentioned many and in fact all of them are rather outstanding in color and appearance in comparison to labels on canned foods ten years ago, but no picture alone, no matter how life like, of a luscious cherry pie will ever make up for the unequivocal statement that the contents of the can are Fancy, Choice, or Standard, coupled with a receipt for making that wonderful cherry pie! Let's have more canners following the lead in 1945 of those who have joined the ranks of the U. S. Inspected Foods Educational Service! The sales of each of you will increase as you do just this.

(SUGGESTION - On the labels mentioned, and on many of the 17 samples, the can sizes are given only as numerals, thus "No. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ size." This needs the addition of the word "can." Call them plainly: Can size, No. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$. The public needs, and wants, education on the sizes of the cans.)